

# The Mysterious Ways of Wang Foo By Sidney C. Partridge

## The Lacquer Cabinet

"I DON'T care what it costs, I want it and I propose to have it. Why, it would be the greatest curio in all my collection. Just think of it—a real Chinese ghost shut up in his own little cabinet and ready to come and go whenever I open the door, like a squirrel in his cage. Isn't it great? It will make those Indian Buddhas and those Burmese idols look like nothing at all, and, just think, Tony, what a spiritualistic seance we can give when we get back to Syracuse, eh?"

"Well, old man, I suppose if you set your heart on it, you'll eventually get it, somehow. I don't believe I ever knew you really to want a thing—that is, a thing that money could buy—that you didn't sooner or later put your hand on it, but it looks as if you were going to have a mighty hard task before you this time. The captain says—and the old skipper has been out here a great many years, you know—that no European has ever gotten his hand on a real genuine one yet, and there have been lots of travelers hunting curios out here before us."

The above remarks were part of a conversation between Reginald Wells, a wealthy young American tourist, from central New York, and his college chum at Cornell, Theodore Trowbridge (known on the campus as "Tony"), as they sat in the smoking-room of the steamer Nam-Ching, out of Hongkong. They were real globe-trotters of the traditional American type. They had started out on a trip around the world, and, incidentally, on a good time, and at this present moment they were having their share of both. They had "done" India, the Straits, Java and Borneo, and now they were on their way north from Hongkong to Amoy to fill full their hunters' cup of joy with a genuine old-fashioned tiger hunt. They had heard incidentally of this sport in the south, but Col. Johnson, the American consul at Hongkong, had whetted their appetite for it to the keenest edge by showing them in his office the skin of a magnificent man-eater. "More than twelve feet long, gentlemen, from tip to tail! Had killed three the week before I shot him—grandest sport in the world, I can tell you."

That was enough. Nothing would do but a tiger-shoot. The consul made every preparation for them and the crack steamer of the Southern Navigation Company was now bearing them rapidly toward the lair of the beast, armed not only with guns and ammunition, but with something equally important, namely: letters of introduction to the leading English firm of the port. Messrs. Waring & Co. had been notified by wire of their coming and they were instructed from their bankers not only to entertain the travelers handsomely, but to have boats and coolies ready for the hunt.

Just at the moment that we are introduced to these gentlemen in the smoking room of the steamer, however, the interest in the tiger had suddenly waned and the all-absorbing topic was the rarity and value of the curios which they had collected in the orient. After listening patiently to their descriptions of the "unique" and "only genuine" articles which they had induced reluctant natives to part with at fabulous prices, Capt. Jones chimed in at last with:

"Well, you may have Buddhas and idols and josses galore, but there's one thing you haven't got—and it's one thing money can't buy, either—one that's a genuine ancestral cabinet with the original ghost inside. I've seen lots of tourists offer for them—and mighty high prices, too—but nary a one did they ever get, for the Chinaman would rather die than sell his ancestor's ghost; and that's what they believe is really in the little tablet in the lacquer box."

"Reggy," said Tony from the opposite side of the room, "we've got more of these miserable curios now than we know what to do with. Why, you could stack the whole museum at Cornell almost full with what we've shipped home already and even if you do induce some disloyal Confusionist to sell his ancestor's ghost it would cost you a small fortune to buy it—so what's the use?"

Six bells rang out from the wheelhouse just at this moment and the appearance of the salon-boy with, "Velly sorry, gentlemen, but catchee lebben clock must putchee out lights," ended the conversation for the evening.

The good ship Nam-Ching dropped anchor in Amoy harbor on schedule time in the morning and the steam launch flying Waring & Co.'s house flag, with the head of the firm himself on board, came out to meet the travelers and give them a cordial welcome to the port and to the hospitality of the "hong," as such business establishments are called in the China seas. They found everything in readiness for the up-river trip and the hunt. Mr. Waring having put his own commodious houseboat, the Marguerite, completely at their disposal, and having engaged extra servants and competent native guides. They could start in a day or two—just as soon as they had rested from the sea trip. The tigers were waiting for them, messengers from the interior having reported further depredations from the beasts in the valleys of Foo-King, to the north of them.

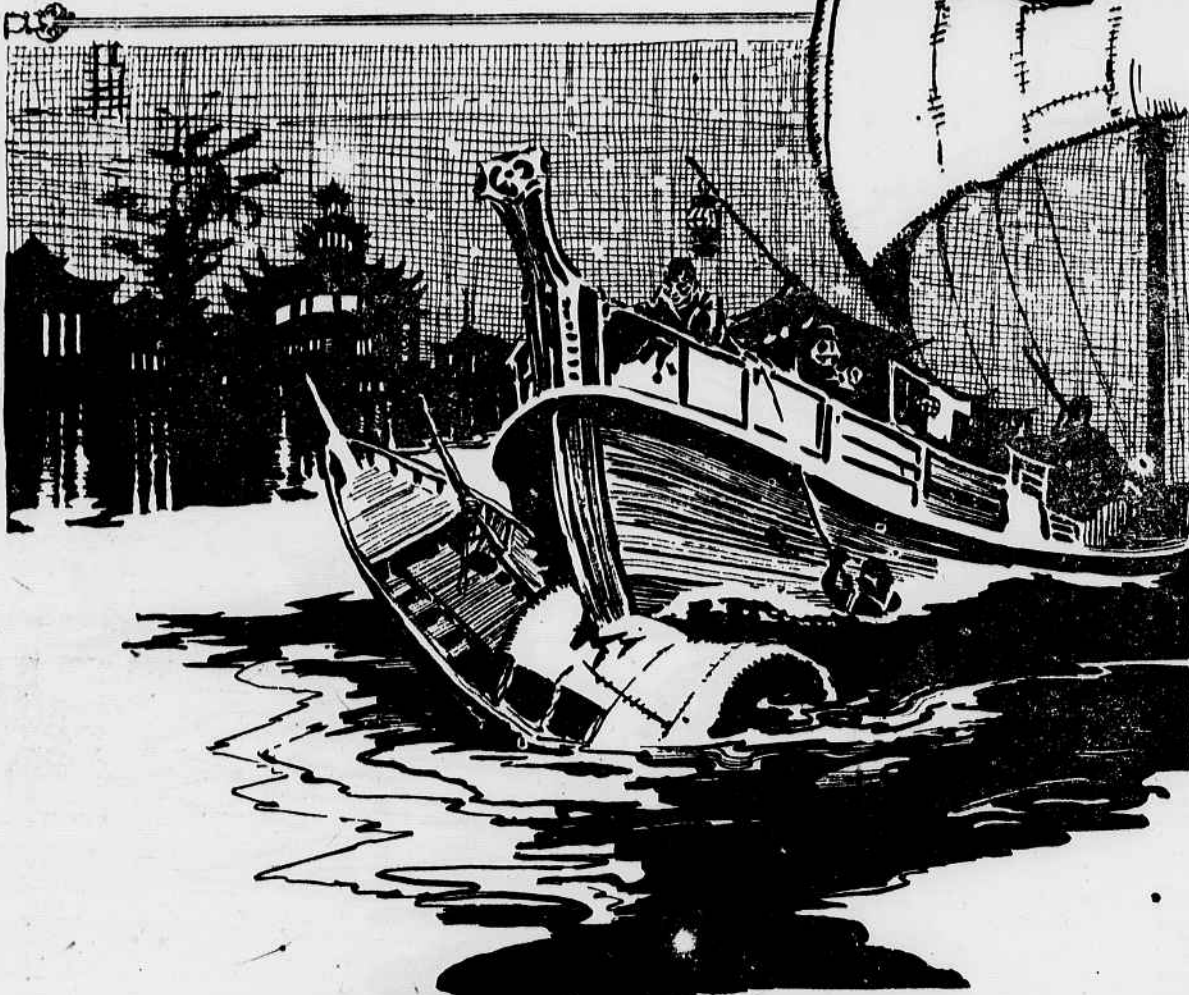
Amoy and its sights were soon exhausted and a picnic to the famous White Deer temple, followed by a dinner to the little foreign community at the hong, completed their program in that Chinese city, popularly known as the "dirtiest of the empire." They were to go aboard the Marguerite late in evening and start at daylight the following morning, when something occurred which made their visit one long to be remembered by their hosts as well as by themselves, and thereby hangs our tale.

Mr. Waring had invited three or

four fellow merchants, together with Sir Warren Chelmsford, the British consul (the American consul being at home on furlough), to join them at dinner and after the coffee the subject of conversation very naturally turned to tigers and the various experiences of Europeans who had gone in search of them. When this had been thoroughly thrashed out, Mr. Wells turned to the consul and said:

"Sir Warren, I am very anxious, indeed, to secure for my collection of curios a genuine gold-lacquer cabinet with the ancestral tablet of some Chinese family. You are an old and experienced resident of the east; how

member that old abbot who sold us his father's pet idol that had protected the family for fifty years, don't you? He was terribly shocked when we offered to buy it for twenty pounds and almost drove us out of the temple, but the morning we left Benares he came around early to the back door of the hotel and sold it to us for fifteen. Don't you think, Sir Warren, that if it was generally known here that two or three hundred Mexicans would be paid—on the quiet, of course—for a cabinet and tablet and ghost complete some noble scion of a Chinese family would be willing to risk it?"



APPEARING AS IF BY MAGIC OUT OF THE DARKNESS, A GREAT RICE JUNK CRASHED DIRECTLY INTO THEM. SPOTTY WAS SWEEP AWAY IN THE FLOOD AND WAS SEEN NO MORE.

no doubt about it, it certainly was the genuine article. Spotty explained it all in the most fluent "pidgin-English." He showed the opening in the top of the tablet through which the spirit of the departed entered and the seals that guaranteed his presence, and then, solemnly drawing forth from his sleeve an ancient dagger, turned to his astonished visitor and said:

"Suppose my no talkee true, you can killee me now."

"All right, Spotty, I'll take your word for it. Put away that dagger; I don't want to murder anybody for all the old curios in China. Here's your 500 Mexican. Wrap it up carefully and put it away in my grip and stow it under my berth on the boat."

Spotty counted the money over slowly and carefully and rolled it up in his capacious girdle. He packed the cabinet according to directions and then, as he reopened the windows and unlocked the door, he added, significantly pointing to his throat, "You no tellies any man till you get Melica side. Suppose mandalin savee my pay you cabinet, he choppee my head off so fashion."

The tide at Amoy is one of the worst on all the Asiatic coast, rising and falling over fourteen feet, and making navigation for small craft exceedingly dangerous. Spotty did not return on the steam launch that took the travelers to the houseboat, but called a sam-pan of his own and directed the boatman to take him to the lower city. The outgoing current swept the fragile little sam-pan along and in a very few minutes they were opposite the custom house wharf and they turned to pass in between the buoys, when, appearing as if by magic out of the darkness, a great Ning-po rice junk crashed directly into them and overturned the sam-pan in an instant. The boatman managed to seize a bamboo rope hanging over the side and clambered on board the junk, but Spotty was swept away in the flood and was seen no more.

There was an unusual excitement in the market street of the town the following morning and the news spread quickly from mouth to mouth that one of the servants in the foreign hong had been seen in the act of robbing his ancestral hall. An old egg peddler from the country had brought the news. He had been resting quietly by the roadside partly hidden by the bushes and had seen Spotty climb over the wall of the inclosure, enter the hall and deposit a few minutes later, with a bundle under his arm. On looking through the window, he saw to his horror that the ancestral cabinet was missing from the central shelf.

He recognized Spotty at once from having seen him at the kitchen door of the hong where he stopped to sell his eggs to the cook. Before night the news had reached the tao-tai's yamen and the runners were sent to arrest the house boy, but returned with the statement that he had disappeared and had left no trace behind him. Under the old law of China by which a parent is held responsible for the sins of a child, the runners returned in the morning and, seizing the compradore, dragged him away to the yamen, to be held there until his son should give himself up. Mr. Watsford was sitting at his office desk

when the second house boy rushed in to him with the news that Hoo-Sam-Tok, his compradore and right-hand man, was actually a prisoner in the hands of the native authorities. He could scarcely believe his senses, but when he realized it was true he seized his hat and, ordering his private launch to be ready immediately at the wharf, hastened at once to the British consulate.

"Well, Chelmsford," he said, in a great state of excitement, "here's a pretty how-do-you-do. The tao-tai has arrested my compradore because his son Scotty stole a miserable little tombstone out of the cemetery last night and they are probably bamboozling him up at the yamen now. My whole hong is upset by this stupid nonsense and I want you to go or send over there at once and order him released."

"I am sorry for you, Watsford," answered the consul, "but you see it's on Chinese soil and entirely outside my jurisdiction."

"Do you mean to tell me that the British government can't send over there and get that chap free? Why, it's outrageous!"

"The only thing that I can do for you is to go over there and ask the tao-tai personally to see that he is kindly treated until the son turns up."

"Well, for goodness' sake go quick, then. You know what those yamen runners are when they get a foreign employe into their hands—they'll have his very life blood if he doesn't pay up handsomely."

The consul and the merchant returned in the launch to the yamen and after an interview with his excellency received his assurance that no harm would be done to the prisoner, but that he was obliged to hold him in confinement until every effort had been made to secure the person of Scotty.

Two full weeks passed by, but not a trace of the criminal could be found. The tao-tai then sent a dispatch to the consul telling him that the town was in such a state of excitement that unless Scotty turned up within six days he would be obliged to apply the torture in order to secure a confession from the compradore and thus appease the people.

"Good gracious," said Watsford, "isn't there any human way of catching the villain and saving his poor innocent father from those infernal demons? Why, if they once get at him they'll kill him, sure as fate."

"I have been thinking over it a good deal," answered the consul, "and I have decided to wire to the governor at Hongkong for Wang Foo."

"And who is this Wang Foo?"

"The most remarkable man in the colony. They call him the 'mysterious.' He is a Chinese gentleman of means who gives his whole time and attention to ferreting out criminals, and seems to succeed when all others fail. His record as a detective among his own people is certainly wonderful."

"Wire for him at once. Tell them to send him on the very first ship and look to me to foot the bills."

The man of mystery arrived on the appointed date and after his usual very careful and painstaking inquiries, together with private examinations of all the parties interested, proceeded to his interview with his excellency, the tao-tai. He was most courteously received and, after the preliminary tea drinking, requested that all the attendants be retired and that the doors to the private apartment be securely closed and locked. The tao-tai reluctantly granted his request. They sat down facing each other upon the couch of honor and took up the tobacco pipes. Wang lit the paper fuse and, looking at his companion straight in the face, made with it certain passes in the air. The tao-tai appeared confused. Wang continued the motions and with the smoke outlined two ancient Chinese hieroglyphics. "Shoong-Hwai!" exclaimed the startled official as he rose. "The brotherhood!"

"The same," answered Wang, as he calmly replaced the fuse in the holder. "You have not forgotten me, then? You remember the case at Long Chow and how I saved you from official disgrace? The time has come, now, for you to return that favor."

"What favor do you ask?"

"The relief and justification of Hoo-Sam-Lok."

"But suppose I do not grant it? What then?"

Wang leaned forward and, gripping the official's hand, held it like a vise.

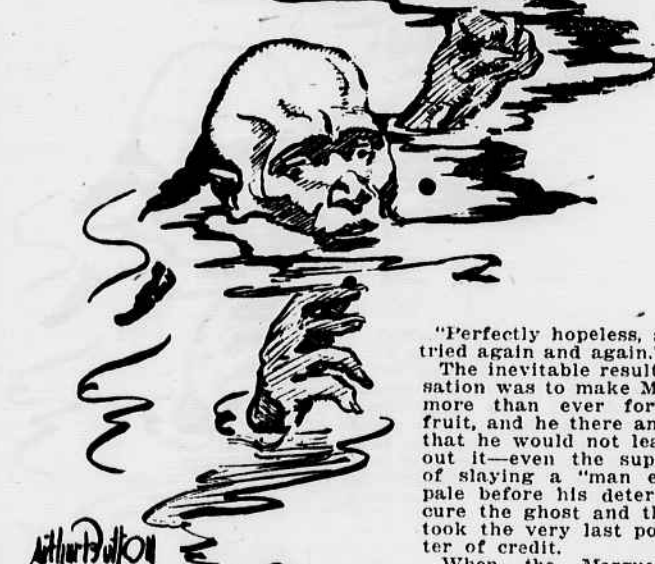
"If you do not, the official promotion to provincial judge which you have been expecting in a fortnight's time will mysteriously fall through! Do you understand?"

"But how can I satisfy the people's demands? They know that a crime of the most heinous nature has been committed and the heads of all the clans and guilds in town are clamoring at my gates for torture and for trial. If I refuse to gratify them I am a ruined man. How can I break the laws and traditions of the empire?"

"Listen!" said Wang, still gripping the tao-tai's hand. "Is it not written in the annals, 'The superior man adjudgeth the punishment to the crime? You know he is innocent—absolutely innocent—you also know as well as I that there are ways of going through these forms without injury to the victim? 'Fak-shing, fak-ching'—'punish lightly,' you know how. See that it is done! I demand it in the name of the brotherhood! Farewell!"

The following morning Wang Foo, the detective, met Mr. Arthur Watsford by special appointment in his private office and, after pledging him to secrecy as absolutely essential to the release of the compradore, addressed him in these words:

"Mr. Watsford, what I am about to say to you will probably astonish you, but you have lived long enough in China to know that there are more astonishing things here than any European has ever dreamed of. I want you to leave this case absolutely in my hands, and I guarantee that the prisoner will return to you on the 30th of the month, without a trace of his unfortunate experiences, thoroughly well and sound and able to resume his duties. He will come back to you with the respect of the Chinese community, completely vindicated of any charge of complicity in the crime of his son, but in the meantime, he must pass through the ordeal which the tra-



"Perfectly hopeless, sir; it has been tried again and again."

The inevitable result of this conversation was to make Mr. Wells hunger more than ever for the forbidden fruit, and he there and then resolved that he would not leave China without it—even the supreme attraction of slaying a "man eater" began to pale before his determination to secure the ghost and the cabinet, if it took the very last pound on his letter of credit.

When the Marguerite lifted her anchor at daylight in the morning the coveted cabinet was aboard, securely locked in a sole leather suit case and hidden away under the lower berth of the cabin.

How did it ever get there? Let us see.

When Ah-Woo, the faithful house-boy of the Waring (and son of Sam-Tok, the compradore), came into Mr. Wells' room late in the evening to assist him in packing his baggage he looked carefully around, closed both the windows and then mysteriously proceeded to lock and bolt the door. Having taken these precautions, he produced from the inner recesses of a commodious gown a carefully wrapped package of yellow silk, and, placing it on the dressing table, remarked to the rather astonished traveler:

"You can save, my blongee Ah-Woo, my master callee 'Spotty' 'cause my catchee smallpox (pointing to the decorations left by that dreaded disease upon his face). My have hear you speakee last night wantchee buy cabinet with Chinaman's spilt inside. No can buy store side. Suppose culio-man sell, mandalin kill he. Have catchee one piece this side can secure my great-gland-father ghost inside he. Suppose you pay me \$500, my givee you, my no can sell."

Spotty here proceeded slowly to unwrap the covering of silk and from it he brought forth a beautiful little cabinet of the most exquisite gold lacquer and set it upon the table. It measured about ten inches in height and about five inches in width. It had two little doors in front, clasped together with bars of delicately carved bronze, and when these were opened they revealed within a golden tablet with the posthumous titles of a man of noble rank. There could be

would you advise me to go to work to get it?"

"Ah, Mr. Wells," replied the consul, "you are not by any means the first one that has asked me that question, and I can only say to you what I have said to all the others—that they are absolutely unobtainable. The Chinese are the most reverential and particular people in regard to the spirits of the departed, and any disrespect shown to them calls down upon the culprits the dire vengeance of the gods. In their 'superstition,' as we ignorantly call it, they firmly believe that one of the ghosts or spirits of the dead—and every individual possesses three—enters into the ancestral tablet of the lacquer tablet. It remains there while the doors are closed and passes in and out when the doors are opened. It must be most respectfully treated; offerings of rice and tea and wine must be regularly supplied to it and 'spirit-money,' as they call those strips of gold and silver paper that you see scattered around the cemeteries, must be provided for all its contingent expenses. When any of these are neglected misfortune of some kind will surely fall upon the family. To injure one of these tablets while it is 'vivified,' as they say, is an insult to one's ancestors, and to destroy it or to sell it to a European—which is the worst insult of all—is a crime which not only surpasses murder, but outrages the entire community where it occurs. So you see, now, why none are ever offered for sale."

"Not for any amount of money? Money is very powerful, you know, in overriding superstition. We found that over and over again in India, didn't we, Tony?" Addressing himself to his chum, he went on: "You re-



ditions and beliefs of my people insist on. Do you trust me?"

"Mr. Wang, I do so, perfectly."

"Then telegraph at once to the firm in Foo Chow to which Mr. Wells had letters from here and have them instruct him to take the steamer direct from there to Shanghai. He must on no account return to Amoy. His presence here would thwart all my plans and be almost certain to start up an incipient anti-foreign riot. The sooner he is out of sight, the sooner will this unfortunate purchase of his be forgotten. As for the rest, leave everything to me. No matter what rumors or reports come to you of the officials' treatment of the comprador, I will bring him back to you myself, safe and well, on the 30th of the month. If you attempt to interfere in any way through the consulate or otherwise—I will not be responsible for his life."

There was something in his voice and manner that inspired confidence and trust, and the merchant pledged himself to comply with his every request.

On the morning of the last day of the month, true to his promise, Wang Foo appeared at the office of Waring & Co., and by his side, smiling and well, walked the familiar form of Hoo-Sam-Lok, the comprador. Amid the rattling noise of packs of firecrackers they were welcomed into the hong, and all sat down to the joyous feast of welcome which the staff of native employees and servants had provided.

"Well, Hoo," said Mr. Watsford, as he extended his hand, "the old firm is certainly glad to see you back! Here's to your health and happiness, and may I express the hope that the whole generation of globetrotters and tiger hunters will hereafter leave Amoy alone, for they have certainly made us trouble enough."

"There's just one thing I would like to ask you, Mr. Wang," said the consul as he bade the detective goodbye on the returning steamer, "and that is: How did that fellow ever pass through that ordeal and live? My chair-coolies tell me that he was 'snaked' and 'cangued' and 'bam-

booed'—they saw some of it themselves in the Tao-tai's courtyard—and any one of those is enough, the Lord knows, to finish an ordinary mortal."

Wang smiled and answered, "Oh, that is simple enough when one knows the inner methods and secrets. You see, the copper snakes around his arms, which were supposed to be filled with boiling water, were really cold."

"But my coolies saw the steam coming out of them?"

"They thought they did, but it was only tobacco smoking in the spouts."

"But the circular scars upon his arms?"

"A little and red blue paint made that look very natural."

"And the wooden cangue, or 'collar of a hundred pounds'?"

"The wood was all carefully hollowed out and the collar was really no more uncomfortable than some of the stiff linen ones you foreigners wear."

"Well, how about the sixty blows

of the licitors' bamboo? They say that sometimes half that number will cripple a man for life?"

"That depends upon the weight of the bamboo. Some are natural wood; some are laden with lead—these are the deadly kind—and others are so carefully split open along their length that though they sound like heavy weights they are really no more painful than tappings with the lightest cane."

"The whole thing, then, was really a farce from beginning to end, wasn't it?"

"That depends upon the point of view. It was necessary for the populace to be convinced of the culprit's innocence and this could only be done by testing him in the way they understood. They would never have taken the Tao-tai's verdict, so he had to convince them, and he did it."

"One question more—the lacquer cabinet; what of that? Did Spotty really steal his ancestral cabinet and sell it to the tourist? You know, I have my doubts."

"No, he did not really steal it. He borrowed it, intending to return it in the morning, but the poor chap was drowned by the sinking of his sampan."

"And was that proved?"

"Yes, the boatman told the story at one of the tea stands on the river bank."

"What was it, then, that was packed with the baggage on the boat?"

"Oh, that was an imitation, skillfully substituted for the original in the cabin."

"Then if Spotty had lived, he would probably have never been found out?"

"Probably not, for he would have replaced the cabinet in the morning."

"And what would you say was the real value of the treasure which Mr. Wells took away and for which he paid five hundred dollars?"

"It would be hard to tell—I should say five dollars, possibly, ten; who knows? He is happy with his curio. Let us be happy also and leave well enough alone."

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# To Reclaim an Empire for American Soldiers

(Copyright, 1918, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

"FARMS for the soldiers!"

Yes and for every man who is willing to work when he comes home from France! Not for hundreds or thousands but for hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions if that many converted by the open-air life of the Army should want to go back to the land!

This, in brief, is the project upon which the government is working. It is a big project, bigger than the question involved in giving life work for the soldier. It is a project which, thus beginning, promises to develop into reclamation of waste land that will increase our national wealth by billions of dollars and add a new empire to the active working forces of the American people.

But first the farm for the soldier! That is the kernel from which is to grow this great tree of national development. We shall look at it as it lies in the nutshell. It is to reclaim the deserts, swamps and cut-over lands of the United States through the soldiers as the employees of Uncle Sam, and to enable them to buy the farms thereby created upon a series of low-interest payments which may run through a third or half a lifetime.

The work of reclamation will be done by the soldiers. They are to be given the opportunity to continue in the employ of the government, constructing dams and canals, blowing out stumps and clearing brush, digging ditches for drainage and, in short, building group settlements in practically every state of the Union.

The settlements will be model community centers, comprising townsites surrounded by forty or eighty acre farm homes, with all the advantages and none of the loneliness of ordinary country life. In doing this the soldier will receive the current wages for the special kind of labor for which he enlists. If he is an engineer he may lay out the canals. If a carpenter he may work at building the houses and barns, and if a mason he may be employed on the dams. The laborers will receive their wages from the government, and there will be well paid out-of-door work for all. After the settlements are completed, the houses and barns built and the soil put into shape each soldier will be given the right to pick out a farm home of his own and to pay for it at a low rate of interest on long time, covering perhaps thirty or forty years. Stock and farm implements, furnished by the government, may be paid for in a period of from five to ten years, and the whole will be so arranged that there will be no element of charity or pensioning in the transaction. The soldier will earn all he receives, and the government will get back in actual cash every cent it expends and also add greatly to the food supply and wealth of the nation.

This scheme, which originated with Secretary Lane, has the approval of the President. Congress has already appropriated \$200,000 for the preliminary investigations, and another appropriation of \$1,000,000 will probably have passed the Senate before this letter is published. The plans are now being worked out by the trained scientists of the Interior Department. Under the general direction of Arthur P. Davis, chief of the reclamation service, the government engineers are traveling over the United States investigating the possibilities. F. E. Weymouth, the chief of construction of the reclamation service, has taken charge of the so-called arid region formerly known as the great American desert. This is in the Rockies and the far west. It comprises the seventeen arid and semi-arid states, with the exception of the eastern parts of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Those sections and the north-eastern part of the country, including also all the land east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio river, is in charge of F. W. Hanna, another reclamation engineer. It contains a large area of cut-over and swamp lands which can be redeemed. The southeastern section, which has the bulk of such lands, is being investigated by H. T. Cory, the man who shut the Colorado river out of the Salton sea for the Southern Pacific railway and who has long been connected with reclamation work of various kinds. In addition to these men the department has secured the services of Dr. Elwood Mead, recently in charge of the land settlement problem in California and for eight years before that connected with similar work in Australia.

The amount of territory we have for such schemes is enormous. I have talked with the reclamation engineers and can give a faint idea of the possibilities. According to them, the area of desert, swamp and cut-over lands that can be reclaimed is more than 300,000 square miles. It is bigger than



HOW UNCLE SAM'S FARMERS OF THE DESERTS ARE LIVING. THIS GIVES SOME IDEA OF THE SOLDIER'S HOME OF THE FUTURE.

the whole German empire, bigger than Austria and Hungary combined and bigger than France or the Spanish peninsula. Put it together and it would make a territory seven times as big as either Ohio, West Virginia or Kentucky, ten times as big as South Carolina and thirty-seven times the size of Massachusetts. It would equal six New Yorks, five Georgias, four Minnesotas or two Californias.

Some of this land is in the deserts and it will be reclaimed by irrigation. There is about 15,000,000 acres of this character, an amount three times as great as the cultivated parts of the Nile valley, which supports more than 11,000,000 people, and which in 1914 gave products for export amounting to \$120,000,000. Much of the Nile land is worth \$500 per acre.

Fifteen million acres! It is just about ten times the area we have already turned into farm settlements by our present reclamation projects. We have now 1,500,000 acres of those lands in cultivation, and there are under water 500,000 acres more which will soon be in use. The amount already reclaimed represents an investment of \$120,000,000, and the crops from it this year will sell for more than half that amount. At the present prices every acre will produce \$60 or upward per annum, and every cent that the government has laid out upon the land will have been paid back by the farmers within twenty years.

Those tracts are now inhabited by 50,000 families who own taxable farm property worth more than \$300,000,000. They are now producing crops which will annually sell for \$100,000,000, or seven million dollars more than all the gold taken out of the United States in 1916. In other words, the lands we have already reclaimed are yielding more than all the gold mines of the United States, including those of Alaska, and that notwithstanding when the youngest boys now in the draft were raw red babies those lands were as barren and dry as the most arid part of the Sahara. All this comes from 1,500,000 acres, and the engineers say we have ten times as much which can be developed as homes for the soldiers. The reclamation lands are now yielding the government about \$3,000,000 per annum, which is applied to new projects. It is believed that similar results will be had in connection with the farms for the soldiers.

But the deserts are the smallest factor in this great reclamation proposition. Their available lands are not one-fifth as large as the swamps. We have scattered over the United States swamp lands having an area of seventy-five or eighty million acres, underlaid with soil as rich as that of the deserts. The total is larger than Great Britain and Ireland, and equal in extent to the three states of Indiana, Illinois and Ohio. It is ten times as large as Holland, a drained country which is now feeding almost six million people; and at the same ratio it could feed sixty million, or more than half of our whole population. Holland is now draining the Zuider Zee to get more land, and the work is costing in the neighborhood of \$200 per acre. Many of our swamps can be drained for a few dollars per acre, and the surveys and plans for some of them have already been made. Before the war in Europe began the topographers of the geological survey had mapped out about 10,000,000

acres, and the work is so organized that they can tell us just where the swamps are and what has to be done to reclaim them.

These swamp lands are in many cases close to the centers of population. They are to be found in almost every state of the live, up-to-date east, and some of them near the big cities. Others are surrounded by farms worth \$100 an acre, and nearly all are accessible by water and rail to the markets. There are something like 72,000,000 acres east of the great plains, and twenty or thirty million acres in the Mississippi delta. Minnesota has about 4,000,000 acres and Maine three or four millions. We look upon Illinois as thoroughly settled; it is the heart of the corn belt and it has oodles of land worth \$300 an acre. Nevertheless there are more than 2,000,000 acres of flooded lands in Illinois that might be redeemed, and every acre will be as rich as any now farmed. There are seventeen different states in the east every one of which has more than a million acres of swamps, and there are twelve others each of which has from a quarter of a million to one million acres that can be easily drained.

The average stay-at-home of the east looks upon California as arid rather than wet. Nevertheless that state has some of our richest swamp lands. The Sacramento valley is several hundred miles long and its basin has millions of acres of wet lands which the government geographers have recently mapped. Drainage is going on there and land which a few years ago was worth nothing is now being sold as fast as it can be reclaimed at from \$100 to \$1,000 an acre. In the Sacramento river they have put dikes about an island and pumped out the water, and that island has now the largest asparagus farm of the world. In other places along the river the redeemed lands are devoted to celery, and they are now shipping carloads of that and other vegetables from there to the east.

The delta of the Mississippi has swamp lands that are far more valuable than the irrigated lands of Mesopotamia about the Tigris and Euphrates, for which the Kaiser planned his railroad from Berlin to Bagdad. The swamps there include more than 20,000,000 acres, and they are so rich that any forty acres will make a good farm. When the land is redeemed it is worth \$100 or upward per acre, and reclamation projects have already been undertaken by private parties here and there through it. Some of these are right on the edge of the cities. During my last visit to New Orleans I rode in a motor car from the principal hotel out to a 7,000-acre vegetable and fruit garden, which had been lifted, as it were, out of the bed of the swamp. The land is only five miles from the heart of the city, and it is richer than any part of the delta of the Nile or the Ganges. I saw thousands of orange trees and hundreds of acres of corn and cotton growing upon that land, and was told that the cost of maintaining the drainage, after the land had been cleared and the pumping arrangements installed, is only 50 to 75 cents per acre per annum. The tract I referred to is kept clear by pumping. Its steam pumps are daily lifting hundreds of millions of gallons of

water from its canals, and throwing it into the streams which carry it off into the Mexican gulf.

There are extensive swamp lands in Alabama and Georgia, and the same is true of Arkansas and Mississippi. A company has been organized and plans made to redeem a half million acres in the Yazoo basin. There are other schemes going on in other states, and especially in Florida, where millions of acres are being reclaimed. The available lands in Florida are almost as great as the whole state of South Carolina, a state which itself has a large area of swamps. In North Carolina and Virginia we have wet lands that will add greatly to our food supply. In North Carolina Lake Mattamuskeet has been pumped out and its 50,000 acres is now cut up into small farms. The tract is called New Holland. The settled lands about it are so rich that farms bring \$100 and upward per acre.

Farther north in Virginia, not far from Norfolk, lies about 150,000 acres that will some day be a winter market garden for New York and Boston. I refer to the great Dismal swamp, the edges of which have been already reclaimed. The lake is surrounded by lands devoted to trucking and the soil under it is exceedingly rich. The first crop usually raised after clearing such lands is what is known as stick corn. For this no plowing or cultivation is needed. The kernels are planted in holes in the ground made by a stick and the corn springs up among the stumps, conquering the weeds and yielding large crops. This is only at first. After a year or so the land must be treated like that of other farms of similar soil.

Coming to the cut-over lands which comprise the bulk of the area possible for the new proposition, I have had a talk with Mr. H. T. Cory, who has just returned from a trip through the greater part of the southern states, where he has been investigating this subject for Secretary Lane. He tells me that lands of this character are to be found all along the coasted plain from Virginia to Texas. They are the lands where the timber has been cut off by the great lumber companies and other parties from time to time. The stumps still stand and new trees have grown up among them corresponding in size to the time which has elapsed since the first clearing was done. Mr. Cory says that there is something like 200,000,000 acres of such land in the south, and that a large proportion of it has as good soil as the average farm of Indiana. At the above estimate those cut-over lands would make about nine states the size of Ohio, Kentucky or Virginia. Reduce the estimate by one-half and the available territory would be bigger by the size of Kentucky than the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which now has something like 45,000,000 people.

A great deal of this cut-over land is being reclaimed by private parties, and some of it is paying more than its original price by the first one or two crops. Mr. Cory told me of a man who bought a cut-over farm two years ago and paid one-tenth down. This year the seller told him he would be glad to accept the crop on the land for the

balance, but his offer was not taken. Some such lands are used for raising peanuts, which is now one of the profitable crops of the southwest; others are turned into cotton plantations and others to corn. These lands are usually held in large tracts. They are owned by lumber companies and individuals who have made their profits out of the timber and will be glad to get rid of them at a low price. I am told that there are so many of them that the government can buy all it needs for the soldier experiment at almost its own terms.

There is one thing, however, that must be emphasized in connection with this reclamation. This is that it is a billion-dollar proposition, undertaken by a billion-dollar country, and that there are billions in it for the United States, if it can be kept outside politics and handled after scientific business methods. In reclaiming the desert lands, which, as I have said, are paying their own way and furnishing millions a year for new projects, the government has developed a large division of reclamation experts, and through them it will be able to organize the new scheme upon an economical and business-paying long time proposition. To do this the congressional grants must be made without cheese-paring and all pork-barrel propositions kept out.

The plan is to make farms for the soldiers, but the soldiers are to pay back to the government every cent that it expends in their behalf. Now it is estimated that each farm of eighty acres with its improvements will cost at least \$5,000. If 10 per cent of the 4,000,000 men now in the Army should elect to take farms we shall have created 400,000 farm homes, costing as a whole something like \$2,000,000,000.

But those farms will be only the beginning of the reclamation. They will be followed by the creation of others for civilians who wish to go back to the land and for immigrants, and this will result in the using of a very large part of this 300,000,000 acres. That amount turned into new farms will increase the number of farms now in the United States by more than 50 per cent, and add more than one-half to the acreage now under cultivation. The average value of our farm lands per acre in 1900 was \$15 and by 1910 it had more than doubled, being by the census of that date fixed at \$32. These new lands will be worth far more than the average, and they will form a live interest-bearing investment that will increase in value for generations to come. In another letter I shall write more about this project and how it is being worked out for the good of the soldier. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

## The Irregular Males.

OLIVER ISELIN, on leave in Tuxedo, was praising the American girls engaged in war work overseas. "And they're good girls," he said, "better girls, I believe, than our country ever turned out before."

"They're certainly better than the old ladies, male and female, who spy on them on the pretense of looking after their morals."

"One of these old ladies, an elderly New York broker, was talking to a canteen girl in Paris."

"Yes," the girl said, "I adore my work. The only thing I complain of is the irregularity of the mails."

"The old broker heaved a sigh and tried to take the girl's hand, but she drew it away."

"Ah, yes," he said, "The males were irregular, too, in my young days. As we used to put it—never trust a female too far nor a male too near."

## An Axiom.

A CONGRESSMAN at a reception in New York, was urged by a peace-maker to come and separate two so-called "parlor bolsheviks," who were wrangling so bitterly that a fight was feared.

The congressman hurried to the contending parlor bolsheviks, he listened to their shrill and angry voices a moment and then he shrugged and turned away.

"Always remember," he said to the peace-maker, "that these chaps who are all wind never come to blows."

## The Sermon Reader.

A CABINET officer usually reads his speeches, but he shares with his Scottish ancestors all their hatred of written sermons.

He told one day an old Scotch woman's remark about a minister whose sermons were always read. "How's the new minister gettin' on?" a neighbor asked the old woman. "Gettin' on?" said she. "Well, he's gettin' on like a crow in a tater field—two dabs and a look-up."